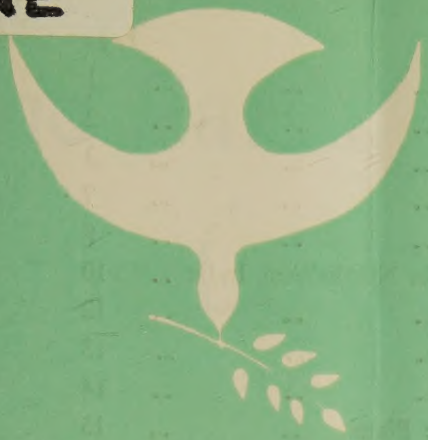


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The South India CHURCHMAN

The Magazine of the Church of South India

JUNE 1992

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The South India CHURCHMAN

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JUNE 1992

EDITOR

REV. DASS BABU

MEGH DEEP APARTMENTS

MAYURI MARG

BEGUMPET

HYDERABAD-500 016. (A.P.) Phone : 847436

HON. BUSINESS MANAGER

PROF. GEORGE KOSHY, General Secretary

Synod Secretariat

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25 Years Ago!

Fundamentally the *Economic Evangelism for Villages* is a problem of Christian theology on which is based policy, programme and finance of the Christian Church. Dr. Raju urged the churches to recognise that along with the theology of the human soul there was a theology of human economics and to extend the planning and getting of the church into the field of village economics.

—DR. S. P. E.
Churchman,

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The Earth is the Lord's...



The realisation that we are at the brink of a total annihilation of our earth came to us very late. Environmental pollution has reached alarming levels in the last five years, industries and automobiles being the main culprits. The need of the hour is to draw a balance between prosperity and pollution, international action and environmental concerns.

The Earth Summit in the Brazilian capital of Rio de Janeiro which was attended by the representatives from more than 170 countries underlined the seriousness of the situation. The summit was listed to discuss environmental issues including carbon dioxide emissions, deforestation, water pollution and extinction of plants and animals. The United Nations, sponsors of the historic summit, estimated that the implementation of the summit's goal—cleaning of the environment would cost 125 billion dollars a year—an astronomical figure which the Third World cannot think of. The developing countries based their case for higher contributions from the developed nations as they not only happened to be main polluters of the environment but they also consume a bulk of the world's income. There have been arguments and counter arguments on who has done the most to damage the environment and biodiversity and who should pay how much to set things right. The developing countries were blaming the developed countries for dumping loads of toxic wastes in the lowest wage countries and establishing dirty industries in the Third World.

According to the scientists gases such as carbon dioxide and CFC—Chlorofluorocarbon—are released into the earth's atmosphere by the rich industrialised countries. As they build up in the atmosphere, they trap heat from the sun which raises temperatures. This warm air melts the ice at the earth's poles and sea levels increase. For the rich countries sea level rise means the risk of economic loss but in the Third World the risk for many people is of death.

After twelve days of painstaking negotiations in this month, the summit participants could hammer out agreements on the basis of mutually acceptable principles. The 27 principles of the Rio Declaration, signed by all participants, represent the optimum ideal that can be reached in

making the world a cleaner place. Agenda 21 records the commitment of developed nations to fund environment protection programmes.

Mr. P. V. Narasimha Rao, our Prime Minister, made his point clear that the problems faced by humanity are inter-related and have to be treated holistically. He articulated his view emphatically when he told the summit, 'All the issues before us are integral links in a single chain, a single package to save the earth'. Just as Mrs. Indira Gandhi had warned the Stockholm Conference on Environment that poverty was one of the biggest sources of pollution. Mr. Narasimha Rao highlighted the linkages between poverty and pollution on the one hand and between environment and development on the other.

Let us look at ourselves and how much we care for the environment. To mention just one instance, most Indian companies dealing with fire-fighting equipment and systems sell Halon gases. Many Western countries banned the use of these gases which affect the Ozone layer. But the extent and amount of use of these gases is shocking. The best way to make the world safer to live in is to start with our own country. We have a lot to do starting with population control. As someone has said that population growth is the mother of all sins and we have still not been able to control it. The growth of population to unmanageable levels has its own repercussions.

What about our rivers? There are thirteen major river systems in the country all of which have become sewers. No river is spared. Yamuna as it flows past Delhi, gets a discharge of 200 million litres of muck from the capital's untreated sewage every day. It is reported that some 27 cities in north India have been identified for dumping their sewage into Ganga. Varanasi is guilty of dumping more than 70 million litres of untreated sewage into Ganga. The ashes, often the half-burnt bodies, of as many as 40,000 dead are annually thrown into the river making Ganga undoubtedly the most polluted river in the world. We can contribute a lot to having a cleaner environment by understanding that environmental protection begins with us. However, in the words of U.N. General Secretary,

Dr. Ghali, the Earth Summit is bound to introduce an attitudinal change among all countries towards the environment.

Whatever may be the outcome of the Earth Summit one thing is clear that we the human beings have failed to be the faithful stewards and have become irresponsible, greedy and selfish. We forgot that the earth is the Lord's and the fullness there of (Ps. 24, 1). The ultimate authority over the earth is not the rulers and the leaders but God, who in His own mercy has given the earth to the whole human

family 'to till it and keep it' (Gen. 2, 15). God expects us to exercise our stewardship with justice; to maintain the integrity of creation; to use and share the earth's limited resources and to sustain and fulfill the lives of all. This affirmation could be the mission of the church and local congregations by offering guidance at this time of anxiety. It can fulfil its mission and play a prophetic role.

—DASS BABA

PERSONAL REFLECTIONS ON MINISTRY

TOUCHED BY FRIENDSHIP

About a year ago, I received an unusual letter from a senior missionary friend and a former colleague. He was taking liberty to ask me to preach at his memorial service, after his death. He was setting apart sufficient money in his Will for me to travel to England for this purpose. Would I go when the time came, if it were physically possible?

I was overwhelmed with mixed emotions of joy and awe. Joy, not just because of the intimate friendship that made him to ask me to do this, but also because I realised the spiritual preparedness of a friend to meet his death, nay His Lord, through death. I had never imagined that such preparedness was humanly possible. Awe, because, I wasn't sure that I would be able to cope with such a task, emotionally and spiritually. Even the thought, would I myself be still alive then?

But it was too precious an honour to decline, too generous an offer to refuse. It took some days for me to reply. I said 'yes' and 'thank you' in very inadequate words. After a few days, I put aside the letter and the idea. There were to be some years before I would be called to face up to the situation.

But all too suddenly, Bishop Newbigin called me from Birmingham after Easter Monday. Bill had died; the funeral would be within a few days. He knew I had been invited to participate in the Thanksgiving service. They would be fixing the date and inform me later, taking into consideration my convenience, time to take travel plans etc. Unpreparedly I said, I shall try to come!

Some of the readers may know personally the Rev. Dr. W. B. Harris, dearly called Bill, by friends. Margaret Harris (Margaret Valentine) who died about 3 years ago is also known to many friends. They both were long-time missionaries in the CSI. Margaret used to be in charge of Christa Seva Vidyalaya. They both built up the continuing theological education in the Technological College, Thirumarayoor and later served as Professors at the Tamilnadu Theological Seminary, Madurai. Bill gave much time to Prison Ministry. Margaret became the mother of Arulagam, the Home of refuge for girls caught up in illegal traffic, first discovered in the prisons. They left India in 1987.

Our friendship, in fact, matured during my Geneva days through mutual visits and correspondence. Our

children became their children. In their home in Rustington, the window sills of the living room were full of pictures of our children and grandson. We were not just friends, rather, fellow pilgrims in Christ, mutually encouraging each other. When I became Bishop, Bill wrote to me a moving letter indicating how the task was going to be tough, but he was sure that God was guiding me. He himself had refused an earlier nomination to Bishopric in the Church of South India.

After the telephone call came, my wife and I had a discussion regarding this matter. Should I go or not? Would Bill feel offended if I did not go? Surely not. We agreed. He is too generous a friend to feel so; and anyway, he is now in the fullness of God's presence where such feelings have no place. The only question is, whether I want to go and can physically make it. I had contracted chickenpox and will have to leave just after four days of my first 'cleansing bath'. As my doctor didn't express too strong a protest, we decided that I should go.

So I went to speak at that service of praise for Bill's life and ministry at the Methodist Church in Rustington. Quite a few Indian friends were present. The local church in which Bill and Margaret were members, had arranged the service and hospitality, with great care and much warmth. That church has been enriched by the active participation and the missionary experience of the Harrises.

Bill himself had given suggestions to the Pastor regarding such details as hymns and Bible portions to be used in the service. One of the hymns was the one sung for Bill and Margaret's wedding. It was a joyous service.

The Pastor told me that Bill had taken Communion on Easter Sunday from him and was well prepared for the end of his life on earth. Bill died on Easter Monday with the anchor of hope of resurrection. Bishop Newbigin preached the sermon at an earlier cremation service.

I spoke of Bill's *Paulineness*. He reminded us in T. T. again and again of the Gospel of Jesus Christ and that we are justified by grace and not works. At sermon criticism classes the main criterion for him was (கவிசை எங்கே?) 'Suvisesam engay?'—where is the Gospel?

(Contd. on p. 7)

Good News to the Whole Creation

(The Bishop Hollis Memorial Lecture, delivered at the Synod of the Church of South India, Palayamkottai, 11-16, January 1992.)

DR. D. PREMAN NILES*

Part II

I. A theology of creation as a basis for understanding the missionary calling of the church amidst a diversity of peoples and cultures

Creation as a perspective for understanding Christian mission in the context of many peoples with their distinctive religio-cultural heritages is not a new emphasis. The limiting nature of a theology of incarnation and redemption divorced from a theology of creation has been recognized in Indian Christian theology in particular and Asian theology in general for quite some time. Already in the 1940s Chenchiah was contending that the religious cultural heritage of India had its own contribution to make for an understanding of the Christian faith and argued for a theology of creation as the starting point for an Indian Christian theology.⁵ Even more specifically, P. D. Devanandan said, 'God's act of redemption in Christ Jesus concerns the whole of his creation. Biblical faith repeatedly affirms that the work of Christ is of cosmic significance in that redemption wrought in Him has affected the entire creative process.'⁶ Later, even sharper language, the Taiwanese theologian Choan Song argued,

When salvation gets divorced from the creation, it is bound to lose its universal dimension and significance. This inevitably leads to the impoverishment of Christian understanding of history and culture and has proved to be detrimental to the wholesome appreciation of Asian history and culture in God's revelation.⁷

I have selected these three examples to show not only the early interest in the theme of creation in Asian Christian thinking but also to point out the fact that the basis for such interest is the theological issue of religio-cultural and ethnic diversity. In an article published in *The South India Churchman* (September 1985), 'The Tower of Babel: An Urban Development project,' Victor Premasagar articulates this issue thus: 'One language and one

speech indicate the will of a few with no room for the viewpoints of others.... The different languages and cultures are indications of the identity and freedom for the different peoples of the earth. These are God-given gifts to men and women to overcome oppressive monolithic structures of power.' Again in his essay, 'The Gods of Our Fathers—Towards a Theology of Indian Religious and Cultural Heritage,' (*The South India Churchman*, December 1985), Premasagar berates the Donald McGavern school with its insistence on reaching the unreached: 'In such missiological circles as this [McGavern's] paper represents, there is a total lack of appreciation of the faiths and cultures of other nations. Cultures of other nations are taken into account only for evolving evangelistic strategies and not as witness to God's revelation amongst other nations.'

Creation theology as a basis for affirming cultural and ethnic plurality is a contribution that Asian theology as a whole and Indian theology in particular have made and can continue to make to ecumenical creation theology. My intention is to provide a theological framework for spelling this out as our witness to the continuing mission of the Risen Lord in our lands and amidst our peoples and as our contribution to an emerging understanding of Christian mission in the context of the whole creation.

I will begin this exploration with Acts 10:1-11:5 which is a pivotal episode in the movement of the good news from Jerusalem to the whole world which the Acts of the Apostles relates in a programmatic way. In Acts 1:8 the Risen Lord tells his disciples, 'You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.' The first stage is reached with Acts 9:31 providing the notice that the church throughout Judea, Galilee and Samaria had peace and was built up. Acts 10 gives the beginning of the movement to the rest of the world. It is pivotal for an understanding of Christian mission in that it shows the two way traffic that comes into place as mission moves from a Jewish milieu to a Gentile milieu.

There are three characters in this story. Peter, the representative of the Jewish Christian church, Cornelius, the representative of the Gentile people, and that most troublesome member of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit.

* Dr. D. Preman Niles is the General Secretary of the Council for World Mission, London. This is the II part of the paper presented at the synod meeting, Palayamkottai.

⁵ See the introduction of D. A. Thangasamy to *The Theology of Chenchiah*, CLS Madras & CISRS Bangalore, 1967.

⁶ P. D. Devanandan, *Our task today: Revision of Evangelistic Concern*, CISRS, Bangalore (1958), 5.

⁷ C. S. Song, *Christian Mission in Reconstruction—An Asian Tempt*, CLS, Madras (1975), ix-x.

Peter is hungry. As the meal is being prepared, Peter goes up to the roof to pray and falls into a trance. He sees a vision in which he is presented with all manner of living things. He is commanded to kill and eat. He demurs with the excuse that as a good Jew he has not allowed anything unclean to pass his lips. To which there is the rejoinder, 'What God has cleansed you must not call unclean.' This happens three times. Peter does not understand the full import of this vision till much later when he meets Cornelius. Then he realizes that his religious convictions, however correct in his Jewish context, could become prejudices that could prevent him from understanding the total scope of God's redemptive work in other contexts. In this encounter, Peter is required not just to acknowledge this fact with his mind but to actually eat it, to take it into his very guts: 'Arise Peter kill and eat'. That knowledge had to be practised through his table fellowship with those whom he considered unclean. In this episode, it is Peter, not Cornelius, who has to go through a conversion experience.

The next day he is met by the emissaries from Cornelius who invite him to visit Cornelius and his household. We are told that Cornelius is a devout man who was acceptable to God long before Peter came on the scene. Peter hears Cornelius' story and makes his momentous confession: 'I truly understand that God shows no partiality, but in every nation anyone who fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him' (Acts 10:34). To unpack what Peter is saying, he comes to the stunning realization that the God who has been revealed through Jesus Christ and whom he worships and serves is not a small God of a small people. This is no tribal God. Rather, this is the God of all the nations. Those who hear God and do what is right have already been accepted by God. This is Peter's confession of his own conversion to the God of the whole creation.

Peter then tells his own story, but presents it without any arrogance. He assumes that Cornelius may already know: 'You know the message God sent to the people of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ—he is Lord of all' (Acts 10:35). The story begins with its location in Israel. He then speaks of the message, the gospel, spreading throughout Judea beginning with Galilee through the ministry of Jesus. He then says that he is one of the witnesses to what Jesus did in Judea and Galilee. He recounts the death, resurrection and resurrection appearances of Jesus. The Risen Jesus did not appear to everyone but to those who were chosen by God as witnesses, who ate and drank with Jesus after his resurrection. Then comes the command given to these witnesses to proclaim that God has appointed Jesus as judge of the living and the dead and that everyone who believes in him receives forgiveness of sins through his name. This is the gospel story up to that point.

As Peter is speaking the Holy Spirit comes. The Holy Spirit appears as the stories of Cornelius and Peter meet. The circumcised were astounded that the gift of the Holy Spirit was given even to the Gentiles. They were astounded not just because Gentiles could receive the Holy Spirit. Gentiles who were circumcised and had become part of the story of Israel and were incorporated into Israel's salvation history could be baptized, and receive the Holy Spirit. Rather, the astonishing truth that Peter and those circumcised persons who came with him had to face was that Gentiles who were not circumcised and had not become part of the salvation

history of Israel could receive the Holy Spirit. This is the miracle of Gentile Christianity. It signalled a decisive break with Jewish salvation history. It is the truth that Paul relentlessly kept hammering home both to Jewish and Gentile churches: Gentile Christians are not subject to the law and are not required to be circumcised. From our perspective, there is another astonishing fact. The Holy Spirit broke the rules. The Holy Spirit should have appeared after, not before, baptism. Peter, in a state of shock, impetuous as ever, asks whether anyone would oppose him should he baptize Cornelius and his household. Everyone is too shocked to say anything. Peter then has them baptized and thus gives the approval of the church.

When he gets to Jerusalem, bishop though he is, runs into trouble. The church disapproves of what he has done. It is interesting that the brunt of the criticism is not that Peter had baptized them but that he had table fellowship with the 'uncircumcised'. Peter is not a theologian. He simply tells his story that now includes the story of Cornelius. In the re-telling, the story of Cornelius becomes part of the continuing gospel story. Peter ends with the statement, 'If then God gave them the same gift that he gave us when we believed in the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I could stand against God?' In other words, if God had decided to accept them even before they had become part of us through circumcision, who am I to resist God. It is remarkable that Peter does not call for circumcision before baptism. Such a move would not have caused a problem. The problem was that Peter had given the approval of the church and granted church membership before they had agreed to become part of the Jewish story.

As we know, the struggle continued in the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15), and even after that as Paul, an anomalous thirteenth Apostle, staked his claim to be appointed by the Risen Lord to be an Apostle to the Gentiles just as Peter had been appointed an Apostle to the Jews (cf. Gal. 2).

This is an extremely rich passage of scripture, and we do not have the time to mine it more fully. I would like to end this exposition with a question. Could we also be attempting to stop the continuing gospel story by using 'baptism' in the same way as the early Jewish church tried to use 'circumcision'? Possibly quoting Jesus (cf. John 4:22), the early church seems to have said, 'Do you not know that salvation is of the Jews? Hence, the way to obtain salvation is to abandon your story and be incorporated into the Jewish story through circumcision.' It is this position that the Holy Spirit contradicts and subverts in the Cornelius episode. Yet now we seem to be saying, 'Do you not know that salvation is of the Christians? Therefore, the way forward is to abandon your story and be incorporated into the existing Christian story.' The witness of the Bible is the exact opposite. It is the Christian story that cannot be incorporated into other stories as the gospel story continued. If this had not happened there would be no Gentile Christians with all of their cultural variety in the continuing gospel story. To put it another way, in the process of proclaiming good news to the whole creation the church from time to time had to be converted to a larger understanding of the God of all creation and therefore to the whole of creation itself in order that it might interact with it in proclaiming good news to the whole creation.

This is the position taken by an Asian ecumenical statement made in 1965 entitled 'the Confessing Church in Asia and its Theological Task':

We have inherited the 'great tradition' of the gospel from those who brought the gospel to Asia, but we believe that Christ has more of his truth to reveal to us as we seek to understand his work among people in their several Asian cultures, their different Asian religions, and their involvement in the contemporary Asian revolution. In the past we have been too inhibited by our fear of syncretism and too tied to inherited traditional and conceptual forms of confession to make such ventures. Such formulations have been signposts and pointers to the truth, but we have often interpreted them, or had them interpreted to us, as the final word of truth so that we have encamped around them, forgetting that even as people of other times and cultures made their own confession, we too must do the same in our time and culture.⁸

The problem is that by and large we have not engaged this task. We have made significant gains in the areas of indigenization and contextualization, but these have tended to remain at the level of interesting experiments and have not influenced the life of the church as a whole. There have been a few explorations into the meaning of baptism, given the fact that it often signifies a cultural picture in the Indian context, but the deep theological consequences of a meeting of religious cultures for understanding the continuing gospel story in our time has yet to be fully explored. We are still so frightened by the spectre of 'syncretism'—albeit a spectre that visits us from outside our context—that we have left many tasks unfinished. Our witness to the continuing gospel story needs to be articulated.

It is not possible to finish that unfinished task in this way. What is possible is to provide a fresh biblical perspective for understanding the missionary vocation of the Indian church, as an example of an Asian church, as it is placed in the midst of many peoples and cultures and to continue the task of proclaiming the good news to the whole creation. To pose the task in the form of a question: what does it mean, especially in the context of India and Sri Lanka, for the people of God (*laos*) to be placed in the midst of the peoples of God (*ethne* nations) in order that it may carry out its missionary vocation of proclaiming the good news to the whole creation? A brief answer would be that if the church is to be credible in proclaiming the good news to the whole creation, it too just be perceived as part of that good news and be a visible sign of the new creation in Christ through whom the world is being reconciled to God.

Called to be a blessing to the nations

Before turning to a biblical perspective for understanding the missionary calling of the church to be a blessing to the nations, I want to present the context in which God calls us to this vocation. The context is one of religio-cultural and ethnic intolerance.

There are two classical forms of intolerance. There is the Hindu form that argues that all differences are but accidental accidents. It devalues all differences, presents itself as the only true, transcendent, eternal religion

—*sanatana dharma*. It then eliminates differences by embracing them and killing them. This is the fate that early Buddhism faced in India and almost did in Sri Lanka. The other form of intolerance is the Semitic form, found largely in Christianity and Islam (Judaism remains a tribal religion), which takes the position that all differences must either be converted or destroyed. Now, even within Hinduism and Buddhism, it is the Semitic form of intolerance that prevails. Again, as in the case of 'man's dominion over nature', it is a problem exhibited by Christianity and then universalized that returns as a challenge to Christian witness. This is the specific context in which the church is called to re-understand its missionary vocation in terms of proclaiming the good news to the whole creation.

For re-understanding the missionary vocation of the church we will look briefly at the canon of scripture. Usually Genesis 1-11, that tells the general human story, is dismissed as a mere preamble to the real Israelite or biblical story that begins with the call of Abraham in chapter 12. A better view would be to understand Genesis 1-11 as a theological setting for what follows. Thus understood, Genesis 1:26f. presents an account of the creation of humanity (*adam*) with a differentiation into male and female to carry forward the blessing given at creation: 'Be fruitful, multiply and fill the earth.' After several vicissitudes in the general human story we come to Genesis 11, the story of the Tower of Babel, that speaks of a further differentiation of humanity into several *ethne* or nations.

In large measure, the interpretation of the Tower of Babel episode has been conditioned by the way in which Genesis 1-11 as a whole is usually understood. The fall of humanity, reported in Genesis 3, colours the interpretation of the rest of the general human story, so that it is seen as an unmitigated account of human perversion and sin that culminates in Genesis 11. Genesis 12 is then viewed as a fresh start with the call of Abraham as the centre-piece in a new human drama. From this perspective, the nations, who are part of the general human story narrated in Genesis 1-11 are expected to find their redemption through Abraham (cf. Gen. 12:3), since their collective histories have already been repudiated.

While it is true that Genesis 1-11 is relentless in its depiction of all forms of human sin and depravity and the condign punishment that follows, it is equally clear in its attempt to portray the Divine concern, or grace, that overrides both human failing and the ensuing punishment, so that God's creation may be both preserved and sustained. From this revised perspective, Genesis 10 may be seen as providing a table of nations, as known to the biblical writer, exemplifying the fact that several nations are a consequence of the blessing given to humanity in creation and renewed in the covenant with Noah. Genesis 11 follows with an explanation of how this happened.

The episode begins with the explanatory statement that till then the whole earth had one language and a limited vocabulary. While migrating from the east, i.e., from Eden (Gen. 2:8), in response to the blessing to fill the earth, the people come to a plain and attempt to settle down. Instead of moving sideways over the face of the earth, they plan to move upwards to reach God himself through the construction of a tower. Then God thwarts the human attempt to move upwards, and

scatters them over the face of the earth by turning a monolingual situation into a multilingual one. Thus understood, plurality is not Divine punishment for the hubris exhibited at Babel. But is rather God's way of ensuring that the blessing given at creation moves on and does not stagnate in one place.⁹ To put it another way, Genesis 11 speaks of the emergence of ethnic and religio-culture identities as a further differentiation of humanity to carry forward the blessing given at creation. Plurality is not the problem. Intolerance is the problem. The problem of non-communication and suspicion that appears in Genesis 11 is symbolically resolved in Acts 2:5-12 when a representative group from the nations is caught up in the Pentecostal experience; and they understand one another and the total purpose of God in Jesus Christ. Acts 2 does not abrogate plurality as a divisive human condition, but rather affirms it as an enriching of one another in receptive plurality.

Following Genesis 11, Genesis 12 picks up one story, the story of Abraham, and immediately links it with the other stories by saying that Abraham is called to be a blessing to the nations (12:13). Towards the end of the canon of scriptures we have Revelation 21:22-27 with its heavenly vision of the New Jerusalem to which the Kings as the representatives of the nations bring their treasures. These do not find their way into the Holy City either through the history of the old Israel or the New Israel. As Lakshman Wickremesinghe pointed out,

The nations have distinctive histories in the providence of God, so that in the final Kingdom of Christ their sicknesses are healed and their riches become an acceptable offering to enrich life in heaven. National histories, both religious and political, have an autonomy of their own.¹⁰

Within this total perspective, the call of Abraham, to which we too are heirs in Christ, is to be a blessing to the nations: 'I will bless those who bless you, and those who curse you I will curse; and all the communities of the earth will find a blessing [or, will bless themselves] through you, (Gen. 12:3).

Scattered among the nations, the Christian community or the church, which holds within it the plurality of cultures and languages, is called to enable the communication and receptiveness that is needed to overcome suspicion, and to lead the nations, as they learn from each other, to a deeper understanding and appreciation of God's purpose for the whole creation. The church is given to the world 'as a covenant to the people and a light to the nations' (Is. 42:6).

⁹ The interpretation of Genesis 11 given in this essay follows the basic thesis of Bernhard W. Anderson, 'Unity and Diversity in God's Creation: A study of the Babel Story, *CurTM* 5 (1978), 69-81. Independently, C. S. Song also has argued for a similar interpretation in *The Compassionate God*, Orbis, New York, (1982), pp. 22f.

¹⁰ Lakshman Wickremesinghe, 'Mission, Politics and Evangelism' *CTC Bulletin* Vol. 5, No. 1-2, (April-August 1984), 48.

Not everything in every religion is good. Nor is everything bad. The continued retelling of the gospel story as it moves forward among the nations is expected to gather in and affirm what is good and eliminate what is bad. The history of Christianity in India is replete with instances of the church being perceived both as a blessing and as a curse, and often for the same reasons. When it has opposed untouchability and opened its doors to the poor and the marginalized, it has been seen as a blessing. When it has opposed *sati* and other forms of oppression of women, it has been seen as a blessing. It has been perceived as a curse by those whose powers and vested interests it has thus challenged and undermined. It has been perceived as a blessing when it has put itself and its services at the disposal of the whole community; and as a curse when it has attempted to exercise the power of wealth and property to grant privileges to favoured and members of in-groups. A self-critical examination of its own history would provide the church in India with the criteria for its on-going mission in response to the continuing ministry of our Risen Lord who goes before us. What often prevents us from moving forward in our missionary task is that we are stuck with certain understandings of mission and evangelism that belong to an earlier era. Or, as D.T. Niles put it more bluntly in a debate on evangelism, 'We are often so obsessed with wanting to populate heaven that we forget to go on with the business of the kingdom!'

IV. Conclusion

The call to mission in Mark 16:15, 'Go into all the world and proclaim the good news to the whole creation' presents us with a two-fold challenge. First, it requires us to see the whole of creation—a reconciled and renewed creation—as the goal of God's mission in the Risen Christ and therefore as the goal of our mission. Second, it requires us to add our own witness to the continuing gospel story. In the Asian context with its plurality of religious cultures, this two-fold challenge requires us to re-understand our missionary vocation in terms of being given as a blessing to the nations. We are in a new stage of the missionary enterprise.

With the whole of creation at the centre of our missionary concern, we acknowledge the rich diversity of God's creation. We are called to proclaim through our lives the gospel of reconciliation—of all things being reconciled to God through Jesus Christ. The gospel of reconciliation does not abrogate plurality but rather, as did happen at Pentecost, enables a receptive plurality that, having overcome the dividing walls of hostility, is in conversation with itself. In order that we may manifest this message of the gospel story we have inherited must intertwine with other stories of human compassion and love for creation so that a reconciled and renewed creation may indeed be the goal of our mission. To that end, we follow the Risen Christ who goes before us into all the world and who bids us proclaim the good news to the whole creation.

Bishop Solomon Doraisawmy



The former Moderator of the Church of South India the Most Revd. Dr. Solomon Doraisawmy, who was Bishop of the Tiruchirapalli-Thanjavur Diocese for seventeen years, entered the glory of his heavenly Father on Friday 22nd May 1992 at Coonoor, South India. Born on 17th June 1917 to an orthodox Hindu family both he and his parents had to undergo many troubles and trials for Christ's sake. His father became a Christian in 1916 and later he and his mother were baptised in 1919.

By the grace of God he had good education. He spent several years as teacher, headmaster and correspondent of the St. Andrew's High School, Arakonam. His long association with the young through teaching and youth

work as well as with the Christian Endeavour Union of which he was President, and the World Christian Endeavour of which he was Vice-President, gave him an international viewpoint. He was also President of the World Christian Tamil Academy and Chairman of APEX, CASA for development.

I had very close and affectionate relations with Moderator Solomon Doraisawmy and his family. At the time when I was selected Bishop of the Madhya Kerala Diocese, the Most Revd. Dr. Solomon Doraisawmy was the Moderator and it was he who consecrated me and enthroned me as the Bishop of the Church. All these years this relationship grew and strengthened. In early years he used to call me in his letters 'My dear Bishop', then 'My dear Mani', and these last years he used to address me 'My dear son in the Lord'.

Moderator Solomon Doraisawmy was a great builder of the Church who was never hesitant to take risks for the Lord. Indeed he always courageously faced difficult situations for the up-building of the Church. Thank God for all his faithful efforts to build up the Church of South India to its present heights.

For his age he was in good health. On the last day of his life on earth the Moderator told some friends that he was expecting a friend in the evening. It was indeed a surprise to Mrs. Christina Doraisawmy because she knew her husband had no such appointment. And the mystery is that when the Moderator and Mrs. Christina Doraisawmy were having an evening walk, the Friend came exactly at the appointed time and took the saintly Moderator Bishop to his eternal abode.

BISHOP M. C. MANI, Kottayam

(Contd. from p. 2)

His *prayerfulness*, How he used to pray for students regularly, write postcards to former students and pray with prisoners, specially those who were condemned to death, before their execution on early mornings, spending sleepless but prayerful nights on such times; His *playfulness*; His jokes and song and funny poems, bringing humour and jest in faculty meetings and in the community. When there was once water shortage in the campus and water was rationed to persons, but not to the cows in the farm, he had a dig at me as Principal, and wrote a note to me now he wished he were a cow!

Friendship, I believed, is one of God's great gifts to humanity. I have been sustained and enriched by friends all my life. Most of all by Bill Harris. He liked me, loved me, criticised me, corrected me, encouraged me. He touched me and helped me to grow.

In this connection I remembered the Moderator's address at the last Synod in January 1992 in which he

reminded the delegates of the first India Bishop, Veda-Nayagom Samuel Azariah, who put a challenge to the churches in the West at the Edinburgh Missionary Conference in 1910.

'You have given your goods to feed the poor,
You have given your bodies to be burned,
We also ask for love,
Give us friends.'

I can gratefully say today, not only because of my friendship with Bill, but because of many other missionary friends that I personally know to fellow-Christians in the churches of the West on behalf of the Churches in India; *You have given us friends*. Thanks be to God.

BISHOP SAM AMIRTHAM

Inauguration of the Friends of the Church in India

DR. MARY TANNER*

Text: Ezekiel 37:15-22, Ephesians 2:11-19, John 17:20-26

What wonderfully appropriate readings we heard for this service to celebrate the coming together of the Friends of the Church of North India and the Friends of the Church of South India in the Friends of the Church in India.

First we heard that passage from Ezekiel, the prophet who was a master of arresting images and acted parables like the one we heard in which the prophet was commanded to take two sticks and to write on the one 'For Judah and the Israelites associated with it': on the other 'For Joseph and the Israelites associated with it': the sticks represented the divided kingdoms now scattered in Exile. The message God gives is this:

I will take the people from among the nations among whom they have gone.
I will gather them.
I will bring them.
I will make them one nation in the land.

The force of the original Hebrew is very strong indeed with its emphasis on the first person: 'I will take'; 'I will gather them'. 'I will make them one'.

Then there was the passage from Ephesians, that Epistle which is a constant source of vision for every ecumenist. In the context of brokenness and alienation between Jew and Gentile Paul writes:

Christ is our peace, in his flesh *he* has made both groups into one; *he* has broken down the dividing wall (that is the hostility between us).

Notice again the emphasis: it is upon *he*, *he* the Christ has made the alienated groups one; *he* the Christ has broken the wall of separation.

And so we come to that sublime passage of our Gospel reading where we are privileged beyond measure to share in the most intimate praying of Jesus to his Father; We heard Jesus pray:

The glory that you have given me, I have given them so that they may be one.

So there is a marvellous consistency in the message of our three readings. The healing of divisions, of hostilities, of bitter enmities between communities and between individuals is gift. It is a gift God offered to his chosen people; it is a gift God offers to Jew and Gentile; it is a gift God offers through Christ to all humanity. Unity is not the result of clever ecumenical manoeuvrings; our brilliant theological dialogues, or our astute union schemes. Unity is not human achievement, it is Divine gift, Divine generosity. It is something we receive out of God's hand and not something we manufacture with our human hands. Of course there is the task of our opening ourselves to receive that which God is always holding out to us; the task of learning to co-operate with God's grace. The daily task is therefore about preparing ourselves, preparing our divided communities to receive that which comes to us from God's hand.

I was once told the story by a woman minister from the Church of South India of how, when an intractable impasse was seemingly reached in the union negotiations over episcopal ministry, the group was asked to remain in silent prayer. There came from that silence, that waiting on God, a consensus, a unity of mind and heart, without which the coming together of churches in the United Church would never have happened. That was a moment of inclination to God's will, a moment of openness to God's gift. Waiting upon the Lord in prayer did not make the hard table talk irrelevant, nor the planned scheme unnecessary but without openness to God's act, God's generosity, there would have been no unity for unity is gift received.

And the gift which God offers is summed up in Jesus' prayer in our Gospel reading:

may they be one in us.

Jesus prays that all who follow him, the disciples then, the disciples now, should be drawn into that mysterious unity which exists between Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Here is the secret of God's gift to us: it is a gift of a share in God's own life of communion. That eternal, mutual self-giving and receiving back love of three persons of the Trinity, glimpsed at in the prayer, is not simply a model God gives us upon which to pattern our life together in the Church: it is the very source and ground of our unity one with another. God's gift to us is amazing: it is to share here and now in the love of the Father for the Son and the Son for the Father, through the power of the Holy Spirit: to dwell in that life which flows between the persons of the Holy Trinity.

* Sermon by Dr. Mary Tanner, Secretary of the Council for Christian Unity of the General Synod of the Church of England on April 25th, 1992 at the Inauguration of the *Friends of the Church in India*.

And so the first thing that strikes me from our readings is that our unity as Christians is not about knocking divided denominations together; it is about receiving God's gift, the unity of God's own life and living visibly within the orbit of that divine unity.

The second thing that strikes me is that those who open themselves to receive that gift of unity are not to hoard it for themselves. It is a gift received to become gift offered: offered first of all back to God in a single voice of prayer and praise and adoration. This is expressed again in Jesus' own words:

may they be one where I am, so that they may look upon my glory.

Contemplation and worship of God's glory in prayer is a gift we together offer back in response to God's gift to us. Nowhere is that offering more faithfully made than when we are united around a single eucharistic table, one people most wonderfully at one with each other and their Lord. That is why the unity we seek is one that is a eucharistic fellowship.

But those who receive God's gift of unity are also called to offer that gift to others. I can think of no other churches who have more to give to the search for visible unity in this last decade of the ecumenical century than the Church of South India and the Church of North India. Their experience of opening themselves to receive God's gift of unity, their example now of living cradling that gift, is gift for us all. One of the most moving things for me about the 1988 Lambeth Conference was the presence of bishops from those United Churches, recognised as full members of the Conference. It was gift to us for it held out a possibility for our own life, a possibility of a life of greater wholeness—'Beyond Anglicanism', 'Beyond Methodism', 'Beyond Reformed Tradition'. You in the Friends of the Church in India are charged with a very special task. Your stated aim is 'to strengthen interest in the life and work and mission of the Church in India'. That is the task of making known God's gift of unity manifested in the life of those Churches. In doing this you show to us that visible unity is not some 'will o' the wisp' which will forever elude our grasp but a gift to be received and lived in the present.

And those who receive God's gift of unity are also called to offer it to the world. That is why Jesus prayed:

may they become completely one, so that the world may know that you have sent me, and have loved them even as you have loved me.

The gift of unity is incomplete as long as all the baptised cannot rejoice in it together as one ecclesial community

around a single eucharistic table. It is incomplete as long as all God's creatures are not drawn into the orbit of God's love. So those who have received the gift are to offer to the world the gift of dying with Christ and rising to new life in him, a life joined to God through the Holy Spirit's power and joined to all who are in him.

So then unity its gift, God's gift we receive, God's gift we are to offer to others. And there is a third thing that strikes me, it is indeed precious gift but it is also fragile treasure in our human hands. We are right today to celebrate what has been realised in the life of the United Churches. But we also know that those churches are not, and never will be, immune from tension and conflict. We do well to remember the fragility of the gift. Difference of opinion, disagreements, tensions—yes even conflicts will always be a part of common Christian living. *Because* there will be differences as we seek to discuss the truth amidst the changes and development of our world. The Church must be prepared to stick with and live through the pain of differences; differences which emerge in the discernment of doctrine, of order, disputes over property and how to distribute resources: the stuff of living in the everyday world.

'We are given to one another in Christ and in his Church not to agree but to belong together.' Even when we do not agree we do not cease to belong to one another. And things that threaten to open new divisions can paradoxically turn out to be gifts: not only because they open up deep theological issues through which we glimpse more profound truths about the nature and being of God, but because they touch deep levels of pain and passion which test what it means that we are commanded by Christ to love our enemies. If we can learn to live in God's gift of unity, bearing the cost of differences, never again saying, 'I have no need of you' we shall get hold at a deeper level of that communion, that unity with a God who suffers, and we shall be rewarded with an experience of that precious gift of unity which is always fragile treasure in our human hands.

So, let us celebrate with joy today God's gift of unity made visible in the Church of North India and the Church of South India and God's grace in our joining together in the Friends of the Church in India. Let us offer that gift of unity in praise and thanks to God and let us pledge ourselves to offer that example to the churches in this country in need of vision and direction in their own pilgrimage to unity and let us promise to nurture and protect that precious gift knowing that it is fragile treasure in our human hands.

A Biblical Interpretation of the Indus Valley Civilization in North-West India

PROF. S P R EBENEZER, M.Com. AND PROF. MARY EBENEZER, M.A., M.Litt.*

Dr. Ivar Lissner in his 'Living Past' had said that the Indus Valley Civilization presents 'the greatest enigma in human history.'¹ Long before the Aryans settled in India this 'Ultra modern' civilization flourished in the North-Western parts of India.

This very old civilization was unearthed from 1921 to 1927 by Sir John Marshall and others of the Indian Archaeological Service at Mohenjo-Daro, (meaning Mound of the Dead) about 300 miles north of Karachi in West Pakistan near Larkhana in the Sindh Province.² Similar findings were also unearthed in other parts of the Indus river basin at Harappa, Chanhudaro etc. 'As all these findings were made in the valley of the river Indus, this very ancient civilization was named the Indus Valley Civilization by Sir John Marshall and other archaeological scholars.'³ It was very soon further established that the sites of this prehistoric civilization stretched as far as Baluchistan.⁴ According to Sir John Marshall in his monumental Archaeological work of 1931 'the inhabitants of Mohenjo-Daro were certainly pre-Aryan and most probably belonged to the race which was afterwards called Dravidians.'⁵ Woddel said 'that the people of the Indus Valley were Sumerians'.⁶ H. G. Wells in his 'The Outline of History' states that the earliest people to form real cities were a people called the Sumerians. They were probably brunets of Iberian or Dravidian affinities.⁷

This ancient civilization, identical with the Sumerian, which takes us back to about 3000 B.C. could only be defined as 'ultra modern' with its well-planned wide and straight roads and a good drainage system. Houses were made of both burnt and unburnt bricks, some storeyed and with courtyards. There were wells, bath rooms with sanitary conveniences. The men knew metallurgy and were artisans and warriors. They used the chisel and saw and could make swords in copper. The women had many household articles, grinding mills etc. and they wore much jewellery such as bangles and bracelets. Traces of Sumerian trade have been found in their books, memoranda and even their letters all written on clay tablets.

It is well-known that the Sumerian civilization reached its zenith before the time of Abraham. In the beginning Sumerian writing was only 'scratch on clay tablets'. It is from such writings on clay unearthed by modern

archaeologists scholars came to believe the Bible to be true.⁸

There can now be little doubt that the book of Genesis was written on tablets. We know that they were in use in the days of Moses. The Hebrew verb 'to write' means to 'cut in' or 'dig', a reference to the early method of writing.⁹

Scholars of the Bible well know that the Book of Genesis was written in Hebrew and in the original Hebrew language there were only consonants. 'The words are written without spaces between them and without any vowels. This may be illustrated by writing the English Genesis I. in thus ;

NTHBGNNGGDCRTDTHHVNSNDTHRTH.¹⁰

Thus the well-known ancient river of modern Iraq, Euphrates was written as 'phrt' in the original Hebrew language.

Genesis Chapter IV records the story of Cain, and Abel the sons of Adam, the first man created by God. It also records the first murder in the Bible.

This story has many significant aspects for the modern world.

1. Cain killed his brother, for which God condemned him to a getaway from His presence.

2. Cain was banished to 'the land of Nod' on the east of Eden (Genesis 4 : 16).

3. Now 'Nod' as found in the Authorised King James version of the Bible is an anachronism for the very simple reason that there were no vowels in the original Hebrew in which the passage was written. It could have been written as only 'Nod' omitting the vowel 'o' from Nod as is found in the Samaritan Bible and spelt as such.

4. Further Cain became the pioneer and leader of human civilization for he built the first city Enoch 'the land of Nod'.

This city Enoch in English is referred to as Canaan in the Hebrew language as shown in the margin of the Authorised version (Genesis 4 : 17). This reminds us of a mound called Chanhudaro excavated by the archaeologists.

* Prof. S.P.R. Ebenezer and Prof. Mary Ebenezer are working as Professors in the Viruthunagar Hindu Nadar's Men's and Women's College, respectively.

gist in the Indus areas about 80 miles south of Mohanjodaro.

It could very probably be the location of the first city built by Cain.

5. His successor Lamech was the leader in polygamy for he had two wives. One of Lamech's successor Jabal, had cattle wealth and another successor Jubal, was the pioneer in music and musical instruments. Still another

successor was a worker on metals. If fact, a short and precise fall of man even in his first attempt at civilised life.

6. Finally the Nod or Nd of the Bible seems to be the basis for the Persian name of Hindu for the Indus country. The Greeks later called it Indos. From this the name of India has been derived.¹²

7. And hence the biblical interpretation of the greatest enigma of Ivar Lissner in human history.

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Pastoral Aid Department

REV. DR. ARUN GOPAL, *Director.*

At the beginning of the current biennium it is my joy and privilege to welcome the Rt. Rev. Jason S. Dharmaraj, Deputy Moderator CSI, as the Chairman of the Ministerial Committee which directs the work of the Pastoral Aid Department. I should like to accord a warm welcome to our Moderator the Most Rev. Dr. B. Ryder Devapriam and the Synod Officers to be involved in the Pastoral Aid Ministry and advice us from time to time, so that the PAD might serve the Pastors, Evangelists, Catechists and Lay Church Workers effectively.

On this occasion we remember with gratitude the rich contribution that the Most Rev. Dr. P. Victor Premasagar and other officers of the Synod during the last biennium, have made in several ways to strengthen the PAD. We need to place on record our appreciation for the former Chairman the Rt. Rev. Vasant P. Dandin, under whose leadership several significant programmes were held during the last biennium.

I. Pastors Continuing Education Programme

'Good News To All Creation' is the theme for the Continuing Education programme during the current biennium, in all the dioceses of CSI. The papers presented at the Palayamkottai Synod sessions are used as the resource material. Efforts are made to produce additional study material, bringing in the concerns and issues of the local congregations, so that the implications of this theme may be grasped by the grass-root level Church leaders. The Director is in touch with theological teachers and Pastors to gather their perspectives.

During the last few weeks the following programmes were held in the dioceses, availing the services of the PAD Director. February 20-22, 1992 Krishna-Godavari Diocese, February 24-26, 1992 Karimnagar Diocese, March 26-27, 1992 Dornakal Diocese and April 11-13, 1992 Medak Diocese.

II. Catechists, Evangelists and Lay Church Workers Retreats

The Director was invited to be a resource person in a Catechists' Retreat arranged by the Rayalaseema Diocese at Gooty on March 1 and 2, 1992. In this connection, it may be stated that a Regional Church Workers Counselling Institute was held at Kottayam, for the four dioceses in Kerala from March 18-19, 1992. Arrangements are being made to hold regional level seminars workshops in Andhra Pradesh (June 24-26, 1992—Secunderabad), Karnataka (August 18-20, 1992—Ecumenical Christian Centre, Whitefield, Bangalore) and Tamil Nadu (September 8-10, 1992—Palayamkottai) on subjects which are relevant to the day-today work of the Pastors.

III. Pastors Study and Reflection Programme(PA-STU-RE)

Through this programme an opportunity is given to the Presbyters and their spouses, to have a brief period of

rest and reflection. Normally this programme is held during the summer months and other vacation period. Pastors belonging to many dioceses are availing the facilities provided by PA-STU-RE programme this year too.

IV. Pastors Summer Family Conference

The members of this committee will be delighted to know that this annual event will be held at Parpale (Mangalore) from May 19-23, 1992. Our Moderator has kindly consented to inaugurate the conference. I am deeply grateful to Bishop D.P. Shettian and the officers of the Karnataka Southern Diocese for consenting to host the conference. Names are still being received from the dioceses, in response to the notices sent by the PAD Director.

V. Sermon Outlines

Due to unforeseen circumstances the book has not yet come out of the press, even though efforts have been made to release them by April 1992. It is hoped that the sermon outlines will be ready in a few days. However, in view of the rotation of the cycles, the sermon notes will continue to be significant for further use. To avoid a similar delay for the next issues covering the third and first cycles the Ministerial Committee has taken an early decision so that sufficient time is given to those who prepare the outlines. The committee has also made a budget provision for this purpose. The same applies to the Bible Study booklets too.

VI. Holy-Land Study Tour

The Pastors and Lay Church Workers are deeply grateful to the Synod for giving them a rich exposure through this programme.

However, it is my humble submission that this opportunity may kindly be extended to the Pastors of Pastors (Bishops) and their spouses too. For the Holy-Land study tour provides such learning experiences, which are beyond the scope of other facilities provided to them. I wish that the Working Committee would kindly consider this, as various categories of Church workers are given the privilege of visiting Holy-Land one by one.

In conclusion, I wish to express our sincere thanks to the Association of Protestant Churches and Missions, which is the only source of financial support, besides the CSI Synod. We have submitted fresh proposals seeking support for another period of two years. The initial response of APCM is quite encouraging. We continue to depend on our Moderator and Synod Officers to secure help for the growing needs of the department, and also the Pastors and Lay Church Workers. I am sure under the leadership of our Moderator the Most Rev. Dr. Ryder Devapriam and Chairman, the Rt. Rev. Jason S. Dharmaraj, the Deputy Moderator, we will continue to move forward.

Council for Education

By DR. W. A. F. HOPPER *Director*

Consultation on Ecological concerns in Higher Education

This was co-sponsored by the All India Association of Christian Higher Education (AIACHE) New Delhi and CSI Council for Education at Vishranthi Nilayam, Bangalore from 6th May 1992 to 9th May 1992. 40 faculty members from 19 CSI Degree Colleges participated in the Consultation.

The themes were the following :

Main theme : Towards one earth community

Sub-themes : (a) Crisis facing the world.

(b) Creative Responses in the context of Higher Education in Christian Colleges

The Facilitation Team consisted of the following members:

(a) Bishop R. Paulraj

(b) Bishop William Moses

(c) Dr. Peter Jayapandian

(d) Dr. Edwin Chandrasekaran

(e) Dr W.A.F. Hopper

Excellent theological and ecological inputs were given by both the Bishops. The other two experts gave the essential academic and professional inputs through lectures, discussion and video presentations.

About 100 posters and charts on different aspects of the Ecology of our planet Earth were displayed in the conference hall. They were very much appreciated by the participants.

10 Articles prepared by the Director and College faculty members were compiled in the form of a book for reference in the Consultation. This was found to be an excellent material for reflection at the Consultation. It is hoped to bring out a printed report of this Consultation, as in the next year, with the financial help from AIACHE and God Treasurer.

I take this opportunity to thank the Synod Officers for their encouragement and support so that the Consultation could be organised this year also. A special word of thanks is due to Dr. Mani Jacob, General Secretary, AIACHE for the readiness with which he came forward to accept co-sponsorship and also make a liberal financial contribution.

Training of local key persons in par in the context of initiating corped in Medak Diocese

This was done at the Diocesan Office buildings at Hyderabad from 11th May 1992 to 13th May 1992.

There was great enthusiasm generated among the participants and Diocesan Officers to welcome back Bishop and Bishopamma from USA.

The Bishop in his characteristic and creative manner led the Training Course for the benefit of the Local Key Persons (LKPs). The LKPs on their return to the villages would be involved in a process of interaction with the help of the Trainer-Modules for a period of about three months. The Peoples' Reports would be produced from each village. The People's report from a village would be the document on which all the Components of CORPED programme would be launched in Medak Diocese.

Three excellent Bible Studies were given by the following :

1. Rev. B. P. Suganthar
2. Rev. B. Prabhakar Rao
3. Most Rev. Dr. Victor P. Premasagar

The Training Programme was organised very well by Rev. Suganthar and Rev. Prabhakar Rao with the able assistance of Mr. D. M. Emmanuel and Mr. Charles Wesley.

Training course for animators appointed in community education centres established in selected corped schools

A 5-day Training Course was organised by Rt. Rev. Jason S. Dharmaraj, Bishop in Tirunelveli Diocese and Deputy Moderator, Synod at the Blind School, Palayamkottai from 16th May 1992 to 20th May 1992. 39 animators attended the programme from 4 Dioceses as indicated below :

1. Tirunelveli Diocese	..	16
2. Kanyakumari Diocese	..	3
3. Trichy-Tanjore Diocese	..	10
4. Madurai-Ramnad Diocese	..	10
Total		.. 39

The following Community-Based Education Workers (CEWs) were also invited to participate in the training programme :

1. Tirunelveli Diocese : 1. Mr. J. John Monickam
2. Mr. S. A. Daniel Moses
2. Kanyakumari Diocese 1. Mr. H. Charles Thankaraj
3. Trichy-Tanjore Diocese 1. Mr. A. Gurumanickam
4. Madurai-Ramnad : 1. Mr. G. Vethapalagan
Diocese

Rev. Simon Sigamony, Diocesan CORPED Coordinator was ably assisted by Mr. J. John Monickam to organise the programme very well. I wish to thank our respected Deputy Moderator and beloved Bishop for all his encouragement and guidance to me for organising innovative developmental education programmes in the church. My thanks are due to all the other Diocesan Bishops for deputing the resource persons and animators for the Training Course.

This is the first time that the Education Council has conducted this type of programme. The Curriculum for Tiny-Tots Education and Parents Education in the Community Education Centres was developed in a workshop held at Vishranthi Nilayam, Bangalore from 1st April 1992 to 3rd April 1992. At that workshop the Bishops from 7 Dioceses in Tamil Nadu Region deputed 5 women delegates each.

For the workshop for Animators under reference, the women delegates from the Dioceses from which Animators have been selected were also invited to provide second-line leadership.

The animators (mostly women) were equipped to mobilise people and organise the Community Education Centres in the respective CORPED Project Schools under the guidance of the Heads of Schools and CEWs.

It is hoped to cover the remaining 3 Dioceses in Tamil Nadu region soon. Thereafter, the other regions will be taken up for evolving Curricula for Tiny Tots Education and Parents Education Programmes in Telugu, Kannada and Malayalam for adoption in the Community Education Centres.



Friends of the Church in India

MARGARET JAMES,

Editor, Friends of the Church in India.

Saturday, April 25th was a day of great thanksgiving and celebration, a day when for many friends of and former workers in the Churches of South and North India there was a deepened sense of fellowship with the Church there and with each other in the Church here.

This was the Inauguration of the Friends of the Church in India—(F.C.I.), when the Church of South India Council and the Friends of the Church in South India, and the Friends of the Church in North India became one organisation. The American Church in Tottenham Court Road was comfortably filled for the Inaugural Eucharist, presided over by Bishop Lesslie Newbigin, the last surviving of the original CSI Bishops, assisted by Bishop Ananda Rao Samuel, a former Moderator of C.S.I., and with others from CSI and CNI, Indians and Westerners, sharing in the service in which the CNI communion rite was followed. The five wicks of an Indian lamp were lit by representatives of CSI and CNI, Friends of CSI and CNI and by a member of the new Committee. The members of the new Committee of the Friends of the Church in India were introduced and inducted in a spirit of thanksgiving and dedication.

Dr. Mary Tanner, Secretary of the Council for Christian Unity of the General Synod of the Church of England, preached an excellent sermon, stressing that unity is not a human achievement but a divine gift; we are challenged to open our souls to receive it and it is a gift not to be kept to ourselves but to be given back to God in prayer and adoration and then to be shared with others. The role of the United Churches is to show that visible unity is not something out of reach. Unity is a gift received, a gift to be offered, a fragile treasure to be guarded.

As we shared at the Lord's Table, missionaries, many of them long retired, others closely associated with India,

Indian brothers and sisters, we were blessed with a deep sense of our unity, and with a vision of the still wider unity that is God's will for his Church.

After the service there was a great time of friendship and fellowship, old friends and colleagues meeting with each other over the buffet lunch, and then a short cultural programme. Two children danced very beautifully and a visiting group from the Karim Nagar and Dornakal dioceses of the CSI who were led by the Rev. J. M. Jogu, CSI Director of Ecumenical Relations, entertained with song. Greetings from the Moderators of the CSI and the CNI, from the Fellowship of St. Thomas in Scotland were shared, and greetings were sent to Miss R. Ansley who had played a big part in all the preparation for the service and in the whole process of the coming together of the two organisations, but who, sadly, was prevented by illness from being there on this great occasion.

Information was given about the new twice-yearly magazine, the 1993 Unity Lecture and future gathering and in closing the gathering, the Rt. Rev. David Wilcocks, Bishop of Dorking and Chairman of the new committee, challenged us all to put integral unity back on the agenda of the Church.

Among its aims and purpose, the FCI seeks to promote within Britain interest in the life, work and mission of the Indian united Churches, to pray with and for Christians in India, to share insights and challenges from the CSI and CNI with churches in Britain and to seek to understand better the political, economic and social context of the Church's life and work in India. Details of membership may be obtained from the Secretary, Friends of the Church in India Office, Livingstone House, 11, Carteret St., London SW 1 H 9 D L.

Churches Meet on 'Earthly' Issues, Urge Action to Save Planet

Over 174 global church representatives from 54 countries met (1-7 June) in one of Rio de Janeiro's most impoverished neighbourhoods to deliberate new ways to 'search for a New Heaven and a New Earth', theme of the World Council of Churches' 'Ecumenical Encounter', a parallel event to the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) which was held 1-14 June.

The gathering, held in a Roman Catholic Retreat Centre, just outside Rio de Janeiro, was facilitated by the National Christian Council of Churches of Brazil (NCCCCB), the Ecumenical Co-ordination Service, the Latin American Council of Churches and the Ecumenical Documentation and Information Centre.

Speaking during opening ceremonies of the encounter, Brazilian Gerson Meyer, president of the NCCCCB, said the presence of the church representatives 'at this moment offers encouragement and strength to the churches in Brazil in moving from under the threat of catastrophe to the survival of the planet and maintaining natural resources via Christian responsibility'.

He added: 'We are happy to have the experience you have accumulated, the knowledge you have gained, and are ready to promote all that we need to do for the integrity of creation to achieve the highest destiny of humanity - justice and solidarity with creation. We hope that the earth will hear the voices of the churches represented here.'

Much of the work that followed was accomplished in plenary sessions and in small groups. Among the topics discussed were 'A New Vision for Creation', 'Indigenous Peoples' Vision and Racial Justice', 'An Economic Future for People and the Earth', 'Overcoming Militarism: Peace in a New Global Context' and 'Ecumenical Ethics'.

Among those who addressed the Ecumenical Encounter were Wangai Maathai of the Greenbelt Movement of Kenya; Rigoberta Menchu of Guatemala, who is one of the 1992 candidates for the Nobel Peace Prize; economist Herman Daly, who is a consultant to the World Bank; and theologians Easter Karsay (Hungary), Larry Rasmussen (USA), Walter Altmann (Brazil), and Leonardo Boff (Brazil).

On 6 June, an all-night vigil in the Cathedral of Duque de Caxias was observed and attended by WCC representatives. The following day at dawn, on Pentecost Sunday, the group was joined by several thousand people from the community, bearing candles in a procession of light to the central square of the town for the Pentecost celebration, worship service and a communal action of sharing bread and fruit.

After the Pentecost service, the group moved back to Rio de Janeiro to join the 'Global Forum' events and to monitor the UNCED process. As an official NGO, the WCC had the privilege of sending delegates to various mediation functions. Two of the WCC's representatives were assigned to the Inter-Sectoral dialogue with leaders of trade unions, professional associations, business and special interest groups. WCC General Secretary Emilio Castro met with government leaders, heads of state and key non-governmental bodies.

At the end of the Encounter, the WCC sent a letter to the churches in which it expressed 'a sense of urgency' at the 'peril' facing the earth (see text of letter in this issue EPS 92. 06. 38).

'Our only home is in plain jeopardy. We are at the precipice of self-destruction. For the very first time in the history of creation, certain life support systems of the planet are being destroyed by human actions', the letter said. It added that meeting in an area struggling against poverty and oppression, an area 'known for deep degradation of life conditions for the majority of the population', the group saw signs of hope among those who are suffering. 'Poverty and violence are overwhelmingly against human beings, along with high levels of environment-degrading pollution. This was symbolic for us, for wherever human beings are denied their God-created dignity, the rest of creation is denied its dignity also.'

In a document on ecumenical response to UNCED, the churches issued a statement addressing the Rio Declaration, bio-diversity, climate change, forests and agenda 21, an ambitious work plan which addresses the areas of environment and development (EPS).



VOICES FROM THE EARTH SUMMIT

Here are some of the comments which heads of State made when they addressed the earth summit.

'For nearly two generations we have lived with the threat of a nuclear confrontation which could destroy the world. That risk is now vastly diminished. But we have awoken to a new threat, the threat that by our actions we could achieve the same result, the destruction of Globe.'

—JOHN MAJOR, *British Prime Minister*

'A peaceful future can only be assured if we make our peace with nature.'

—HELMUT KOHL, *German Chancellor*

'... We demonstrate our continuing commitment to leadership and to international cooperation on the environment.'

—GEORGE BUSH, *U.S. President*

'We inhabit a single planet, but one of many worlds. Such a fragmented planet cannot survive in harmony with itself...'

—P. V. NARASIMHA RAO, *Prime Minister*

'When there are no more pretexts for arms races and military expansion what prevents the developed countries from offering funds for environmental protection?'

—FIDEL CASTRO, *Cuban President*

'This is unique and perhaps the last opportunity to build a new world...'

—F. C. DE MELLO, *Brazilian President*

Department of Ecumenical Relations

I had the privilege of taking a group of six persons from Dornakal and Karimanagar Dioceses to England for our South-North Exchange Visit Programme. We spent three weeks in England. The group visited different churches and institutions in Birmingham, Bradford, Milton Keynes and London.

On Saturday the 25th April 1992 we had the privilege of participating in the INAUGURATION OF THE FRIENDS OF THE CHURCH IN INDIA. A celebratory Eucharist was held at the American Church (Whitefield's Tabernacle), 79 Tottenham Court Road, London. Rt. Rev. Lesslie Newbigin and the Rt. Rev. Anandarao Samuel conducted the service. Dr. Martin Tanner, Secretary of the Council for Christian Unity of the General Synod of the Church of England was the preacher.

The Church of South India Council in Great Britain and the Friends of the Church of North India have joined together to become the 'Friends of the Church in India.'

After the Church service a buffet lunch was served and later a cultural programme in which the Officers of the new organisation were introduced. Our group sang a lyric in Telugu language and I conveyed the greetings of the Moderator and of the Church of South India. Following are the newly elected Officers :

Bishop David Wilcox, Bishop of Dorking—*Chairman*

Rev. Barrie Scopes—*Secretary*

Rev. Nihal Paul—*Membership Secretary*

Rev. Charles A. Watson—*Treasurer*

Mrs. Joy Martin—*Asst. Treasurer*

—REV. J. M. JOGULU

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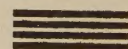
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